

Catalogue of Works

onespace

ragi

Elisa Jane Carmichael

18 August - 2 September 2023



ABOUT THE EXHIBITION

Exhibition Dates:	18 August - 2 September 2023
Artist Talk:	Saturday 19 August, 4-5pm
Opening Event:	Saturday 19 August, 5-7pm
Onespace Gallery Hours:	Tuesday to Friday 10am – 5pm Saturday 11am – 5pm
Gallery Contact:	(07) 3846 0642 or info@onespace.com.au

In late August to early September, Onespace is delighted to present a very vibrant, short season of new work by acclaimed mid-career artist Elisa Jane Carmichael. Her exhibition, titled *ragi*, comprises 95 cyanotypes that celebrate the seasonal change on Minjerribah. Ragi, meaning 'bush' in jandai language, is a series of imagery stitched together using cyanotypes, wildflowers and talwalpin (cotton tree) threads. The textile installation captures the changes of plant life in the land and sands of Quandamooka ragi, blooming with the cycles of seasons and abundance.

[See full list of works available for sale.](#)

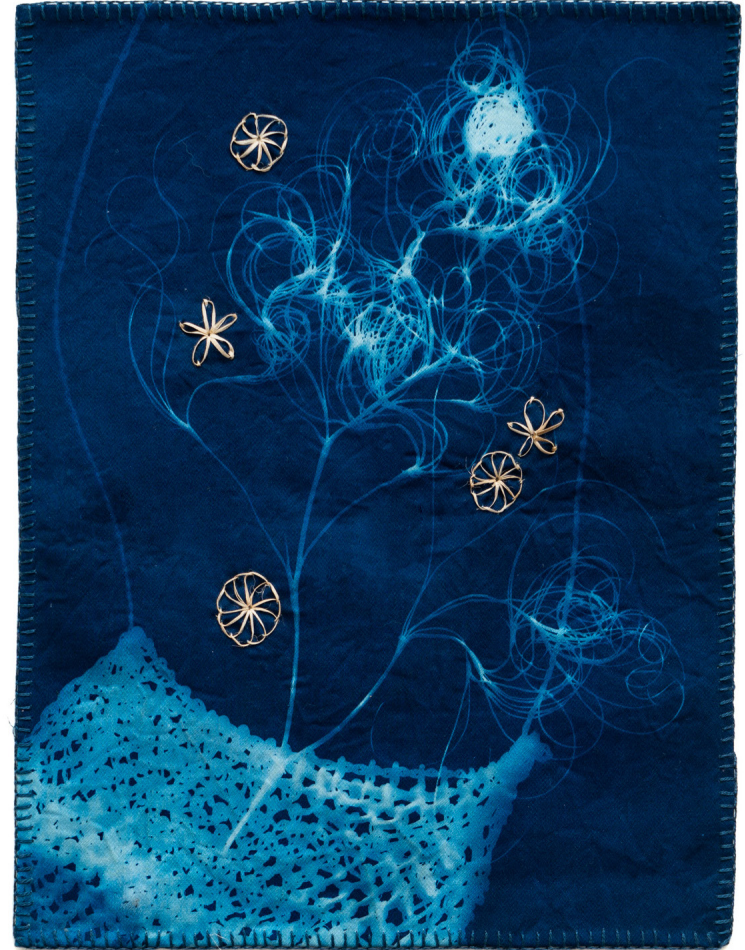


Image: Elisa Jane Carmichael, *ragi* #27, 2023. Cyanotype and embroidery, 27 x 20cm. Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Photo: Louis Lim. Image courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

Quandamooka woman Elisa Jane Carmichael is a multidisciplinary artist who honours her salt-water heritage by incorporating materials collected from Country (Minjerribah/North Stradbroke Island), embracing traditional techniques, and expressing contemporary adaptations through painting, weaving, and textiles. She comes from a family of artists and curators, and works closely with her female kin to revive, nurture, and preserve cultural knowledge and practice. Elisa is a descendant of the Ngugi people, one of three clans who are the traditional custodians of Quandamooka, also known as Yoolooburrabee—people of the sand and sea.

Her practice explores the beauty of nature and surrounding environments, drawing inspiration from her cultural identity and heritage. Elisa has a Bachelor of Fine Arts, Queensland College of Art, Griffith University (Brisbane, Australia); and a Master of Fine Arts, QUT (Brisbane). She has created woven wearable collections that have been included in Cairns Indigenous Art Fair Fashion program and Kluge-Ruhe Aboriginal Art Collection, Virginia, USA.

Recent group exhibitions include Busan Biennale 2022 (South Korea); Primavera 2021 (MCA); Naadohbii: To Draw Water, (Museum of Melbourne) and Winnipeg Art Gallery (Canada); Tarnanthi 2020: open hands at the Art Gallery of South Australia and Two Sisters a singular vision (Queensland Art Gallery, 2020). Carmichael participated in the Women's Wealth Project as part of the Asia Pacific Triennial 9 (APT9) at the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art in 2018. Elisa Jane Carmichael has also been a finalist in the Telstra National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Art Awards (NATSIAA) exhibition in 2018 and again in 2021. Carmichael has also revealed her first public art installation, Water is Life (2021) at South Bank parklands (Brisbane, Qld).

Elisa Jane Carmichael is further developing her practice through both new techniques and materials acknowledging, nurturing, and protecting her culture and the resources of Quandamooka Country. Her unique explorations into contemporary Quandamooka weaving and vivacious use of colour and materials, are becoming more distinctly recognised by esteemed industry colleagues across the country. Elisa draws upon her practice to reflect on visual ancestral experiences of Quandamooka Bujong Djara (Mother Earth), to share the beauty, power, and importance of Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) yesterday, today, and tomorrow—ngayigany, ngayiganya, ngayigawa (seen, seeing, will see).

Ragi

Collecting the wildflowers on Mulgumpin and Minjerribah is a symbol of the continuum of family life and appreciation of the beauty of the land and flora.¹

I love imagining our ancestors gathering wildflowers and enjoying the smells of the bush and the sounds of the birds in the change of seasons.²

The genesis of the ninety-five small works in *Ragi* are wildflowers collected by Elisa Jane Carmichael on Minjerribah's sand tracks on 'a magic day' during spring 2021. Two years later, the flowers have been transformed and memorialised through using a flower press the artist made with assistance from her father. They are printed as sun-infused cyanotypes that include other elements such as ungaire (freshwater swamp reed), gulayi, and string. Many of these prints are embellished after their exposure, finished with embroidery using talwalpin (cotton tree) bark, then edged with blanket stitch. In this way, they draw Carmichael's contemporary presence together with the history of her family and ancestors in this saltwater place.

The cyanotype technique renders the natural elements a pale ghostly blue against indigo depths, and captures their floral beginnings. Leaves, woven nets and dilly bags become shadowy silhouettes that drift with an aquamarine sensibility. This technique is used by Carmichael, at least partly, for its ability to allow the agency of materials to be complicit in what is revealed and concealed in the work.³

Their shapes become unfamiliar, with leaves carving space, seed pods looking foreign in their reversal, fine tendrils of reed curling like hair. Yet, they also echo their natural beginnings with textures, scents and tactile qualities evoked in tandem with the cultural traditions and knowledges that revolve around the

ongoing relationship with Country. As Carmichael says, 'These plants can grow all together in the bush in groups or sometimes on their own. I was thinking of the joys of flowers and their scents and how we have lived with these plants for millennia.'

The bark-embroidered motifs hover over the cyanotype images like small floral translations of the insects and fauna that coexist with plants, uniting culture with nature, flora with fauna, and the holistic harmonies connecting Carmichael and her Quandamooka people to Minjerribah.

As we have come to expect of Carmichael, this new body of work opens and upends our expectations. Her contemporary embrace of the shadows and joys of the past and the strength of continuing traditions is joyously expressed.

Louise Martin-Chew

Louise Martin-Chew writes about art and artists. Recent books include *Margot McKinney: World of Wonder* (2022) and *women of Brisbane: judy watson* (2021). Her biography *Fiona Foley Provocateur: An Art Life* (2021) won Best Book at AANZ awards (joint) and was shortlisted for the Magarey Medal for Biography (both 2022).

¹History, *Life and Times of Robert Anderson, Gheebelum, Ngugi, Mulgumpin* (Place: Unikup Productions Ltd, 2001), frontispiece.

²Elisa Jane Carmichael, email to the author, June 2023. All other quotes by Carmichael are from the same exchange.

³*Evoking the Spirit of Country: Elisa Jane Carmichael*, video, Primavera, MCA, 2021, <https://www.mca.com.au/stories-and-ideas/evoking-the-spirit-of-country-elisa-jane-carmichael/>.

Elisa Jane Carmichael

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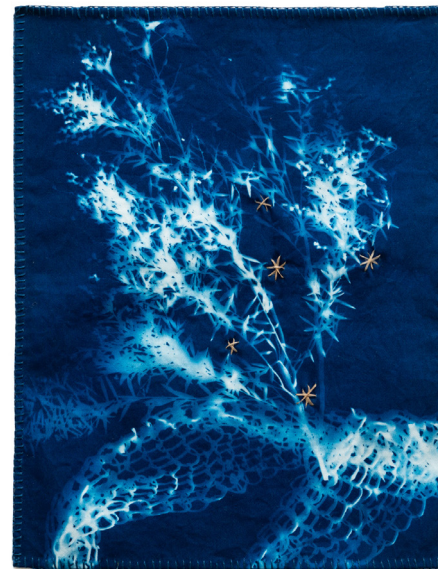


Image: Elisa Jane Carmichael. *ragi* installation shot (left to right): *ragi* #15 - *ragi* #22, 2023. Cyanotype and embroidery, 27 x 20cm each. Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Elisa Jane Carmichael
ragi #1, 2023
cyanotype and embroidery, 27 × 20cm

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Elisa Jane Carmichael
ragi #2, 2023
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Elisa Jane Carmichael
ragi #3, 2023
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Elisa Jane Carmichael
ragi #4, 2023
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Elisa Jane Carmichael
ragi #6, 2023
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Elisa Jane Carmichael
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Elisa Jane Carmichael
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ragi #30, 2023
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Elisa Jane Carmichael
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Elisa Jane Carmichael
ragi #39, 2023
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Elisa Jane Carmichael
ragi #42, 2023
cyanotype and embroidery, 27 × 20cm

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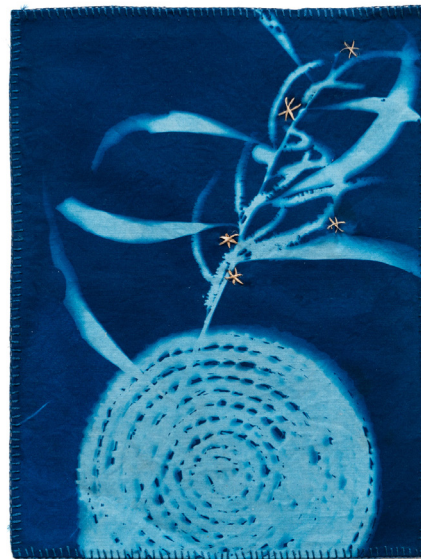
Elisa Jane Carmichael
ragi #43, 2023
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Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Elisa Jane Carmichael
ragi #45, 2023
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Elisa Jane Carmichael
ragi #48, 2023
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Elisa Jane Carmichael
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Elisa Jane Carmichael
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Elisa Jane Carmichael
ragi #87, 2023
cyanotype and embroidery, 27 × 20cm

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.



Elisa Jane Carmichael
ragi #95, 2023
cyanotype and embroidery, 27 × 20cm

Photo: Louis Lim. Courtesy of the artist and Onespace.

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